



METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
3000 Granny White Pike
Nashville, Tennessee 37204
Telephone: (615) 862-7970
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION 408 Second Avenue, Ben West Market House June 17, 2015

Application: Historic Landmark Overlay for Ben West Market House

Map and Parcel Numbers: 09302005000

Council Districts: 19

Applicant: Mayor Karl Dean

Project Lead: Robin Zeigler, robin.zeigler@nashville.gov, 615-862-7970

Description of Project: Mayor Karl Dean is requesting that the Ben West Market House be adopted as a Historic Landmark Overlay.

Recommendation Summary: Staff suggest the Commission recommend to City Council that the Ben West Market House be adopted as Historic Landmark Overlay. The site meets the standards of the Ordinance for a Historic Landmark Overlay and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Attachments
A: Photographs

Vicinity Map



Aerial Map



Background:

It's fitting that the old City Market is now a courthouse as the two have always been closely related. The first Market House in Nashville was built in 1802, across the street from a new Courthouse constructed in the same year. Both were replaced by new buildings erected in Public Square in 1828 after falling into disrepair. The new Market House was completed first and was used by the Tennessee Supreme Court for a short amount of time while the Courthouse was being completed. That building would house the market for over a century. It sustained damage in both the 1897 fire and the 1933 tornado before finally being razed in 1937 to make room for the current Courthouse on the south side of James Robertson Parkway. The Ben West Building was also built in 1937, making the two buildings the oldest remnants of Public Square still standing today.

The Ben West Building was designed by Henry C. Hibbs, the same architect who made Peabody College, Scarritt College, and the Fisk University Library. The brick and concrete frame building originally had a copper roof and is known for its iconic dome. The company Foster & Creighton won the bid and began construction in 1936. The City Market opened there the following year and would stay downtown until 1955 when it moved to its current location. The makeup of the City Market is well documented. Dozens of stalls were placed throughout the main floor and dry goods could be found upstairs. The basement consisted of a garage and restaurant for shoppers. If the patrons did not wish to sit and wait for their food, a small café was also location on the main floor. A little out of place from the primarily food-oriented merchandise found there was the City Traffic Department, which was housed on the first floor as well.

After the City Market closed, the Ben West Building became known as the Safety Municipal Building. A large rear addition was constructed in 1956 that housed a fire department and city jail. Interestingly enough, the site of the Ben West Building was originally a police station and Fire Engine Company Number 10, so this new development reclaimed the area's lost past. The addition was torn down somewhere between 1960 and 1980, by which point the building was called the Metro Safety Building and contained the Drug Abuse Center, offices for traffic tickets and violations, and a portion of the General Sessions Court. Over the next twenty years, the building started to take on more and more court responsibilities and was renamed the Ben West Municipal Building in honor of Nashville's mayor from 1951-1963. The building underwent a massive \$6 million renovation from 2006 to 2007 as part of a large-scale plan to improve Nashville's court system. It now houses Chancery Court, Circuit Court, and several Metro Government offices.

Applicable Ordinance:

Article III. Historic Overlay Districts

17.36.120 Historic Districts Defined. B. Historic Landmark. An historic landmark is defined as a building, structure, site or object, its appurtenances and the property it is located on, of high historical, cultural, architectural or archaeological importance; whose demolition or destruction would constitute an irreplaceable loss to the quality and character of Nashville and Davidson County; and that meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. The historic landmark is associated with an event that has made a significant contribution to local, state or national history;
2. It is associated with the lives of persons significant in local, state or national history;
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic value;
4. It has yielded or may be likely to yield archaeological information important in history or prehistory; or
5. It is listed or is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Analysis and Findings:

The Ben West Market House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion 1 in that it is associated with the development of Nashville.

Staff suggests the Commission recommend to City Council a Historic Landmark Overlay for the Ben West Market House.

PHOTOGRAPHS



